Eye-Witness: *How We Burn 'Em Up in Vietnam, Pps. 2-3*

Understatement of the Year

"The bombing of North Vietnam and the Ho Chi Minh trail has not of course absolutely stopped the flow of men and supplies from North to South."
—Jos. Alsop Nov. 18 arguing against any bombing pause.

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If Only The Albanians Had A Sense of Humor

If the Albanians had a sense of humor, they would support the Italian resolution at the UN for a commission to study the China problem, but with an amendment, instructing it also to study the American problem. They would suggest that the UN, if it was to survive as a force for world order, really had two problems. One was whether to let Peking in. The other was whether to let Washington out. The Americans, the Albanians might admit, are smoother than the Chinese. While Peking insults U Thant, the wily Occidentals flatter but ignore him. Both undercut the UN.

Too Many Wars of National Liberation

As the delegate from the other China argues, it's not simply a question of universality. Membership should be open only to those nations sincerely prepared to abide by the Charter. Article 2, Sec. 3, obligates all members "to settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security . . . are not endangered." Is the bombing of North Vietnam in accordance with this principle? Peking is not the only big power which worries its neighbors. Article 2, Sec. 4, obligates all members to "refrain . . . from the threat or use of force" against the "political independence of any State." Under Eisenhower the U.S. overthrew the government of Guatemala; under Kennedy, it tried to overthrow the government of Cuba; under Johnson, it sent troops to reshape the government of Santo Domingo. These American "wars of national liberation," the Albanians might point out, are as upsetting as China's.

An even greater danger—they might argue—is Washington's interpretation of Article 51. This allows any member, "if an armed attack occurs," to take measures of "individual or collective self-defense" but only until the Security Council acts. Any measures under Article 51 must be reported "immediately" to the Security Council. The purpose was to allow for self-defense without splitting the world again into hostile blocs. Chapter VIII of the Charter does allow for "regional arrangements" but within control of the world body. Article 54 says the Security Council "shall at all times be kept fully informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation" under these arrangements. Washington has used Article 51 and Chapter VIII to create a world-wide network of alliances. The military planning committees of the OAS, NATO, CENTO and SEATO have never yet reported their plans to the Security Council. The result is a rival system for policing the world, indeed two of them, one led by NATO, the other by the Warsaw Pact. The Framers of the Charter sought to prevent just such a squaring off for a new war. The Albanians might suggest that both Washington and Moscow be asked to dissolve these rival alliances as the price of continued membership in the UN.

The Albanians might also propose that while the Commission looked into the two China problem, it study a parallel difficulty. The world was confronted with many divided countries. In some, as in Korea, Germany and China, division had worked fairly well in preventing or ending civil war. In others forcible efforts at reunification were a constant threat to the peace. In the United States, for example, even after a century, the South was still unreconciled to its forcible subjugation by the North. Every UN member knew what shocking murders went unpunished in the South as Northern agitators infiltrated, particularly when they tried to stir up the peasantry in the Mississippi delta against their landlords. The situation was incredibly confused, with a Southerner leading the North and another Southerner from Alabama named Wallace trying hard to stage a counter invasion. There was the constant danger of a new civil war and foreign intervention. If in the interests of world peace, there were to be two Chinas in the UN, perhaps there ought also to be two Americas, one Confederate, one Yankee, with Lyndon Johnson in the Security Council and Lurleen Wallace in the General Assembly.

Everything Mini But The Napalm

"Washington, Nov. 18—Secretary of State Dean Rusk suggested today that the U.S. might agree to a brief Christmas cease-fire in Vietnam but . . . he seemed intent on ruling out a repetition of last year's experience, when a Christmas truce led to a 37-day suspension of American air strikes against North Vietnam. . . . The expectation of American officials . . . is that Pope Paul VI will issue a truce appeal as he did last year. In anticipation of such a move, State Department officials have coined a word 'minitruce' . . ."

—New York Times, *November 19.*

While we're coining such useful phrases, why not this year proclaim mini-peace on earth, with mini-good will to all men, for a mini-Christmas by a mini-Christian country?

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Sample Excerpts From A Superb Piece of Reporting in *Flying* Magazine . . .

Frank Harvey, military aviator, novelist and reporter spent 6 weeks in Vietnam and wrote a special supplement on the air war there for the November issue of Flying, *which is unsurpassed for its picture of what the war is doing to our fliers and Vietnam's people. All the excerpts on these two pages are from that issue which can be obtained (75 cents) from Flying Magazine, 1 Park Avenue, New York 10016.*

By Frank Harvey

The dominating figures of the air war in the [Mekong] Delta are the forward air controllers. They fly around looking for signs of guerrilla activity in little single-engined Cessnas known as O-1 Bird Dogs. . . . The FACs have the authority to call missions only after approval by the province chiefs, except in dire emergency when friendly troops are under fire. They have the authority to divert planned strikes to targets of opportunity when they think necessary. They cruise over the Delta like a vigilante posse, holding the power of life and death over the Vietnamese villagers living beneath their daily patrol. . . .

From the air all the communities in the Delta look bucolic and peaceful to the unpracticed eye. But to the FAC pilot ordinary-looking things sometimes read danger. . . . If anything looks suspicious, the FAC can radio in an air or artillery strike against anything in the Delta within a matter of minutes . . . at his beck and call a fleet of helicopters and fighters equipped with a terrifying arsenal of weapons. . . .

Still Burning In His Live Flesh

The FAC's list of fireworks is long and deadly . . . when it hits and ignites, the burning napalm splatters around the area, consuming everything it comes in contact with. The white phosphorus bombs are also incendiaries. In the civilian hospital at Can Tho, I saw a man who had a piece of white phosphorus in his flesh. It was still burning.

The CBU's—cluster bomb units—are even more popular with the FAC's than napalm. The CBU consists of a canister filled with about 800 metal balls the size of softballs. Inside each metal ball is a cluster of smaller balls or "bomblets." Moving through the air with the forward motion of the jet that released it, the larger metal balls roll out of the CBU tube. Then compressed air scatters the bomblets inside in all directions. These go off in a wide swath and look "like sparklers" from the air. The CBU's kill or maim anything in the open or inside a hut along an extended path a couple of hundred feet wide. If you can use these properly, you can lawn-mower for considerable distances without a break. . . .

The VC hate the FAC. It is he who fingers the death-bringers. If they catch him on the ground, they kill him. Near Pleiku, one FAC was literally skinned alive by the VC. More FAC's have been lost in Vietnam than any other type of pilot.

When you are dawdling around at 70 knots 1500 feet in the air over people you intend to barbeque, they tend to want to zap you in the behind. Every now and then they do. . . .

Nice to Start By Bombing the Defenseless First

"Dixie Station [on an aircraft carrier off South Vietnam] has a reason. A pilot going into combat for the first time is a bit like a swimmer about to dive in an icy lake. He likes to get his big toe wet and then wade around a little before leaping off the high board. So it is fortunate that young pilots can get their first taste of combat under the direction of a forward air controller over a flat country in bright sunshine where nobody is shooting back with high-powered ack-ack. He learns how it feels to drop bombs on human beings and watch huts go up in a boil of orange flame when his aluminum napalm tanks tumble into them. He gets hardened to pressing the firing button and cutting people down like little cloth dummies as they sprint frantically under them.

"On Yankee Station, some hundreds of miles to the north, the shoe is definitely on the other foot. When you fly into North Vietnam against the triple-A [anti-aircraft] and the SAMs (surface-to-air missiles), when the air is so full of flak bursts you can't see how you possibly can go through them unhit, the experience earned on Dixie stands you in good stead. Warm-up lasts a week to 10 days before you steam north into the real hell."

Said the Major In Charge of Defoliation: "We Are the Most Hated Outfit in Vietnam"

"Ranch Hand is the code name for the defoliation operation in South Vietnam. The pilots who fly the Fairchild-Hiller C-123s in this operation are said to be the most shot-at people in the war. They are known by the crude but descriptive name of 'magnet-asses.' Ranch Hand's motto, lettered over the Ready Room door: 'Only We Can Prevent Forests.' Major Ralph Dresser, USAF, a rugged All-American football player from Texas, is Ranch Hand's commanding officer. Dresser speaks in a polite, well-modulated voice, and uses English with skill and precision. But he gives you the feeling that, if he decided to, he could simply grab your arm, tear it off and hand it back to you. One might sooner kick a Bengal tiger than say something nasty to Maj. Dresser. He runs a taut, self-contained unit and his plane has been hit not less than 78 times.

"Ranch Hand operates on a 6-day week, two mission per day schedule. A mission lasts from 40 minutes to 2 hours—depending on the target. The seven-plane, all volunteer squadron has earned 27 Purple Hearts and seldom returns from a mission without bullet holes, largely because the defoliant spray must be applied from a height of 150 feet at a speed of 130 knots. Any higher and the spray doesn't get on the foilage in sufficient strength. Any lower and the foilage is overkilled—a waste of expensive chemicals. An average 11,000-lb. load costs $5,000, takes 4 minutes to spread and kills everything green over 300 acres. . . .

"Dresser says Mekong Delta missions are the worst. The Delta country is flat, and Vietcong gunners can see him coming for miles. They have time to get set, draw a bead and let fly. . . . Rice and other crops that might feed the VC are killed. . . . 'This is a very touchy thing,' says Dresser. 'A mission to kill crops goes right to Henry Cabot Lodge for approval. It can boomerang if it's not handled right.' Peasants who lose crops are supposed to be paid in full for their losses. Unfortunately they aren't always paid in full. Greedy province chiefs and sub-chiefs sometimes pocket money the U.S. earmarks for peasant victims of Ranch Hand. 'The VC tell the peasants that our spray is a deadly poison,' Dresser said. 'But I'm going to show you it isn't.' He stuck his finger under one of the spigots on the dispenser drum, then licked the oily stuff. 'It tastes like kerosene with chemical overtones—not good, but hardly a deadly poison unless you drink it, which nobody is likely to do.'

" 'We are the most hated outfit in Vietnam,' Major Dresser said. 'Nobody likes to see the trees and the crops killed, but it's necessary.' "

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. . . Reveals What The Air War Is Doing to Our Pilots and Vietnam's People

Before I left the Delta, I spent five days and nights in the operating rooms and wards of the Can Tho civilian hospital. Usually two people shared a bed and sometimes the emergency room was using all three tables at the same time and people were lying on the floor and even outside on the porch. Most injuries were from gunshot, mortar or napalm. Dr. Frank Camp, the director of the Air Force Surgical Team and boss of this huge old hospital, told me they treated more civilians there than the Arvin hospital next door treated wounded soldiers. . . . Of the hundreds of casualties, a very high percentage were women and children. . . .

They Admire "Charlie's" Courage

The shop talk of the Huey [armed helicopter] pilots was grim, colorful and to the point. "I shot up Charlie in the paddies today," one of them said. "I ran that little mother all over the place hosing him with guns but somehow or other we just didn't hit him. Finally he turned on us and stood there facing us with his rifle. We really busted his ass then. Blew him up like a toy balloon." Another pilot commented on this. "You got to hand it to those little mothers. They got the guts. If we had them on our side, we'd wrap up this war in about a month." . . .

The missions I have described exemplify the fact that it isn't much of a problem, with our overwhelming aerial firepower, to shoot up Charlie pretty bad once we engage him. It isn't easy to lose with a modern air force when all you're up against is small arms fire. But to destroy the enemy you first have to find him. . . .

The essence of successful guerrilla warfare is sneak attack. . . . The Viet Cong . . . count on being able to strike hard without warning and vanish. . . . Charlie used to feel safe in his jungle redoubts. He could light up a cooking fire at night and eat his supper with serenity. But nowadays we fly over him in RF-4C Phantoms with infrared cameras and take pictures in which his fire shows up as a white dot with a tail . . . and suddenly out of the peaceful sky a large explosive shell falls in the middle of Charlie's meal. . . . If word comes that the VC are trying to get a little rest in some forest retreat like the Iron Triangle, 31nm north of Saigon, the Strategic Air Command loads a flotilla of bombers from Guam with fifty-one 750-pounders per plane, flies over and wipes out a whole valley. . . . Once the VC in the Delta are located, and they have to stand up and fight, they have about as much chance against American air power as our planes would have against fleets of space ships with death rays. . . .

I also dropped in to visit the Helio Courier U-10s, which fly psychological operations out of Can Tho. They fly around and drop *Chieu Hoi* (Open Arms) leaflets inviting the VC to come in and get amnesty and rehab. It seems to be working well. A substantial number of VC bring in the leaflets—which is certainly better for them and for us than shooting them up. The cost of killing a VC is estimated to be over $100,000 per man.

In another portion of the Flying *supplement, Mr. Harvey describes the deadly gauntlet of ack-ack in the North, the high toll it exacts and why limits are imposed on the bombing of the North. We recommend it highly.*

What Will Such Men Be When They Return?

"Our combat flyers in Vietnam are distinctly different from those in past American wars, because they are career pros, almost to a man. The average age of our pilots there is 33, 10 years older than American flyers in the Second World War. And they're absolutely hard-nosed. You'll never find these qualities better exemplified than in the Huey gunship 13th Aviation Battalion, which headquarters at Can Tho. The skipper, Col. Wm. Maddox, has the look of a gladiator. His eyes glow fiercely in his red-tanned face. . . . The American Huey troops at Vinh Long are without doubt the most savage guys I met in Vietnam (and the jolliest!) I was impressed by them. But they scared me. . . . They came muttering down to the paddies and hootch [hut] line, fired at close range and saw their opponents disintegrate to bloody rags 40 feet away. . . . They wore flak vests and after a fire fight was won they landed on the battlefield, got out and counted their VC dead. Each man had his own personal sidearm he carried along for mopping up."

A Vivid Account of How and Why Our Pilots Sometimes Get An Attack of Conscience

"I saw bright aluminum cigars detach from his belly and tumble end over end. Two cans of napalm hit without exploding. Then more cans hit and the village was obliterated in a great rolling cloud of flame. Involuntarily I looked away. When I looked back two of the huts were burning brightly. 'Couple of duds,' the F-100 jock said disgustedly over his radio. 'The damned igniters must have goofed.'

"Now the two jets were setting up their strafing pass. They took their time. There was no hurry. Nobody was shooting back. One at a time, they made a deliberate race-track pattern and a long careful final. Then they flashed over the village at 40 knots and walked their 20mm shells through the houses in a flurry of dusty explosions. When they had fired out their ammo and pulled off the target, I asked Col. Goldsberry if he would please take me home as I felt a little queasy. He was a very considerate man. He said he would indeed.

"A FAC [Forward Air Controller] must be very sure of what he's doing before he calls in the jets. He can kill a lot of innocent people if he makes a mistake, which sometimes happens. I met a FAC who had been directing gunfire from Navy destroyers against hootches [native huts—IFS] and VC concentrations for several months. The destroyers were many miles offshore in a rolling ocean. This young man had been relieved of duty because he had openly declared himself guilty of assisting in the killing of many civilians because the long-range guns had fired wild so often, hitting houses and people in the vicinity of the target coordinates. It was impossible not to feel the agony this boy was suffering. 'I just want to go home and forget it forever,' he said.

"Another FAC who had just flown his last artillery-directing mission over a nearby village was in the bar at the Eaton compound in Can Tho. He said he was going back home to the States the next day. He had been ordered to direct artillery against a village because 'three VC were reported there this morning.' He got over the village, he said, and looked down and all he could see were men, women and children walking around. He radioed back to the Arvins [Army of South Vietnam—IFS] and told them he didn't see anybody who resembled a VC but that there were civilians in the village. Did the province chief really want this place hit? They radioed back that the province chief did, and to send the coordinates. 'I sent them,' this young FAC told me and drained his drink.

" 'You must have seen a lot of people killed,' I said.

" 'No,' he said. 'No people got killed. Nobody was in the paddy where I directed the artillery fire.' "

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The Government's Sudden Passion for Civil Liberties In the Bobby Baker Case

More Creative Freedom Under Czarism Than Even Now in Post-Stalin Russia

What strikes us most in the appeal made by 65 Soviet writers to the Kremlin in the Sinyavsky-Daniel case, and even in Lidiya Chukovskaya's nobly indignant letter to the novelist Sholokhov (see texts in *New York Times* Nov. 19) is that they do not quite dare to affirm the necessity for freedom of expression, whether in capitalist or socialist society. The 63 go no further than to say "We need more freedom for artistic experiment." Mme. Chukovskaya comes closer to classic liberal doctrine when she writes, "Ideas should be fought with ideas, not with camps and prisons." But none are quite bold enough to invoke again the great tradition which comes down from Spinoza and Milton and Jefferson and affirms freedom of thought from State control as a fundamental value. Until this idea is grafted on to socialism, Sovietism will not produce a good society. Those "rootless cosmopolitans", Marx and Engels, would have been appalled to think that a society presumably based on their ideas gives less freedom to writers than did Czarism. Mme. Chukovskaya's letter cites Tolstoy's "Resurrection" and Dostoyevsky's "House of the Dead", with their "humanizing message", against Sholokhov's lynch-spirited neo-Stalinism. It is painful to realize that neither book if newly written could be published in the Soviet Union today. We cheer the cleansing wind that begins to blow in this writers' revolt.

What The "Bugs" Are Hearing

If the FBI is bugging Washington conversation about the sudden turn taken in the Fred Black tax case, both Lyndon Johnson's and J. Edgar Hoover's ears must be burning. No one knows the full extent to which the FBI and other government snoopers listen in on private conversation. What makes people here wonder is why, just two weeks after the Supreme Court upheld Black's conviction last May, Solicitor General Marshall sent the Supreme Court a memorandum admitting the FBI had overheard conversations between Black and his lawyer. Since the government denies this was known to those of its lawyers who worked on the prosecution and since no one would have known anyway if Marshall had not disclosed it, why was this unusual step taken? Why the sudden passion for civil liberties? The effect was also to undercut the case against Bobby Baker, which is closely linked to that of Black's. Baker in turn is linked to Johnson whom he so long served as right hand man. The government has already stipulated that it violated Bobby Baker's constitutional rights by secret eavesdropping. If Hoover were not the capital's No. 1 sacred cow, this stipulation would be enough for proceedings against him. Title 18, Sec. 242, U.S. Code, makes it a crime punishable by 10 years in jail and $5000 fine to conspire to injury any citizen's constitutional rights. This extraordinary turn may save Baker as well as Black from conviction. The FBI is not usually so ready to volunteer information that it has been violating the law. Top politicians in both parties worked closely with Baker when he was Secretary of the Senate, and may fear what he might tell if he faced the prospect of going to jail. This is only a pale version of what Washingtonians are saying in the absence of a full explanation from the Justice Department.

Wall Street Journal Agrees Only Peace Can Save LBJ

"Johnson aims to rebuild his popularity from its current low. Main approach: To paint himself as a statesman, toiling for posterity. There'll be more presidential trips abroad. LBJ will stress the pluses in U.S. foreign policy. He'll angle for easing of Cold War tensions via some rapproachement with Russia. Look for new effort at bipartisanship in foreign policy, with more Republican consultations.

"Johnson will strive to revive his consensus on domestic matters. He'll hold down new legislative proposals, hoping to keep up his batting average in the less liberal Congress. 'He'll push popular plans, like fatter Social Security benefits that don't add up to budget strains.' There'll be more talk about 'raising the quality' of American life.

"But skeptics claim Johnson's image is deeply marred by impression that he's irritable, oversensitive, politically unprincipled. They feel only an end to the Vietnam war could offset the ill effects."

—*Washington Wire:* Wall Street Journal, *Nov. 18.*

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